**By the Banks of the Nile *from* The Story of the Amulet**

E. Nesbit

They looked at each other.

“Well!” said Robert, “this IS a change of air!”

It was. The air was hotter than they could have imagined, even in London in August.

“I wish I knew where we were,” said Cyril.

“Here's a river, now — I wonder whether it's the Amazon or the Tiber, or what.”

“It's the Nile,” said the Psammead, looking out of the fish-bag.

“Then this is Egypt,” said Robert, who had once taken a geography prize.

“I don't see any crocodiles,” Cyril objected. His prize had been for natural history.

The Psammead reached out a hairy arm from its basket and pointed to a heap of mud at the edge of the water.

“What do you call that?” it said; and as it spoke, the heap of mud slid into the river just as a slab of damp mixed mortar will slip from a bricklayer's trowel.

“Oh!” said everybody.

There was a crashing among the reeds on the other side of the water.

“And there's a river-horse!” said the Psammead, as a great beast like an enormous slaty-blue slug showed itself against the black bank on the far side of the stream.

“It's a hippopotamus,” said Cyril; “it seems much more real somehow than the one at the Zoo, doesn't it?”

“I'm glad it's being real on the other side of the river,” said Jane. And now there was a crackling of reeds and twigs behind them. This was horrible. Of course it might be another hippopotamus, or a crocodile, or a lion — or, in fact, almost anything.

“Keep your hand on the charm, Jane,” said Robert hastily. “We ought to have a means of escape handy. I'm dead certain this is the sort of place where simply anything might happen to us.”



















